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# Medals and Medallions

## Union League Gold Medal

Excerpts from newspapers and other  
sources

From the files of the  
Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection

GEORGE A. DONDERO  
17TH DIST. MICHIGAN

HOME ADDRESS:  
ROYAL OAK, MICHIGAN

SECRETARIES:  
LUCIE A. FORD  
R. FOREST MCCONNELL  
BETTY M. GILBERT

COMMITTEES:  
RIVERS AND HARBORS  
EDUCATION

## Congress of the United States House of Representatives

Washington, D. C.

July 12, 1941.

Dr. Louis A. Warren,  
Editor, Lincoln Lore,  
Lincoln Nat'l. Life Ins.Co.,  
Fort Wayne, Indiana.

Dear Dr. Warren:

I have just received numbers 637 and 638 of  
Lincoln Lore.

Number 637 written regarding the Lincoln Founda-  
tion Advisory Group has challenged my attention. I do  
not think that I saw or noticed the ballot which you  
sent out sometime ago in regard to forming this group.  
Had I noticed it, I am sure I would have voted. Many  
of the members selected are persons known to me, at  
least nine out of the nineteen. I hope that your sugges-  
tion and plan may prove helpful in disseminating infor-  
mation and providing ways to make known various phases  
of Lincoln's life.

I now come to the purpose of this letter. I do  
not now recall whether or not you have devoted any time  
to the subject which has always been hazy in my mind,  
that of Lincoln's first wedding date. As you know it is  
claimed that he failed to appear. Can you give me some  
information about it? I discussed it somewhat with Mrs.  
Helm and Katherine Helm, the author of "Mary Wife of  
Lincoln".

A few years ago Mrs. Robert Todd Lincoln presented  
me with a gold medal which was presented to Lincoln by the  
Union League of Philadelphia on July 4, 1863, on the same  
date, they also presented to each Member of his Cabinet  
silver medals of exact design and wording. You will notice  
that the presentation took place the day after the battle  
of Gettysburg ended and on the same day that General John  
C. Pemberton surrendered his Confederate army at Vicksburg  
to Grant. I learned not long ago The Union League, still

Dr. L.A.Warren, page #2,

7/12/41

in existence, kept replicas of these medals. From what I learned from Mrs. Lincoln and Frederick N. Towers, who was Robert Todd Lincoln's private secretary, the medal was presented as an expression of confidence of the League in Lincoln in his conduct and policy in regard to prosecuting the Civil War. This might furnish you with some material for Lincoln Lore. I have the medal here.

Whenever you come to Washington, please remember that you have a standing invitation to call and see me. I say this knowing of your great interest in Lincoln and as one who had the very rare privilege of knowing Robert Todd Lincoln, the President's son, his family and also Emilie Todd, last living siter of Mary Todd.

Kindest regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Geo. A. Dondero". The signature is fluid and elegant, with a large initial "G" and a long, sweeping underline.

George A. Dondero, M.C.

GAD:F



July 23, 1941

Mr. George A. Dondero  
Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives  
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Dondero:

Your interesting letter of July 12 is before me and the delay in reply is due to my vacation period.

You will please find enclosed some copies of Lincoln Lore and a copy of the Lincoln Kinsman which mention rather briefly the fatal January 1, 1841.

I am interested in the medal which you have and I am wondering if it is similar to the copy of the one in our collection. Ours, however, is in white metal and I think it may be the same design. We would be interested indeed in knowing whether or not you have been able to identify the gold piece which you have.

We think we can find a place for a citation in a Lincoln Lore issue which will appear within the next two or three weeks so we would appreciate your identification of the medal if it is convenient.

It will be a pleasure indeed to visit you at Washington but I do not anticipate being there in the very near future.

Very truly yours,

LAW:BST

Director

4.  
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EDUCATION

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, D. C.**

July 24, 1941.

Dr. Louis A. Warren,  
Editor, Lincoln Lore,  
Lincoln National Life Ins. Co.,  
Fort Wayne, Indiana.

Dear Dr. Warren:

Your very courteous and interesting letter of July 23 has just reached my office. I answer immediately.

You ask me if I can identify the gold piece which I have. Enclosed herewith is an impression placed on paper of both sides of the medal. You will notice that it in no way corresponds with the one you have.

As I informed you in my former letter, I did not know that exact medals in silver were presented to the Members of Lincoln's Cabinet on the day he received the gold medal until I spoke in Philadelphia when the president of the Union League of that city informed me of the fact that such was the case and that they had kept replicas of these medals in their office.

Thank you indeed for your material in regard to the wedding date alleged to have been set January 1, 1841. I might say that I discussed this matter with the Helm family and they deny that any such date had ever been set.

Kindest personal regards,



George A. Dondero, M.C.

GAD:F



UNION LEAGUE  
July 4th

1776                      1863  
E Pluribus Unum

Philadelphia



ORGANIZED  
PHILADELPHIA

December 27th 1862



July 29, 1941

Mr. George A. Dondero  
Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives  
Washington, D. C.

My dear Mr. Dondero:

Thank you very much for your very prompt and full reply to my letter with respect to the Lincoln medal. I am now working on a Lincoln Lore in which we will be pleased indeed to mention the item which you have among the valuable medals

Very truly yours,

LAW:BST

Director

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EDUCATION

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, D. C.**

April 22, 1942

Dr. Louis A. Warren, Editor  
Lincoln Lore  
Lincoln National Life Insurance Company  
Fort Wayne, Indiana

Dear Dr. Warren:

You may recall that some time ago I wrote you in regard to a gold medal which was presented to me by Mrs. Robert Todd Lincoln, the medal belonging to Abraham Lincoln.

I have now received from Mr. Fred N. Towers, who was secretary to Robert Lincoln, as you know, a letter indicating the occasion on which the medal was presented to me. I have also written to the Union League of Philadelphia in regard to the matter and have just received their reply today. I am enclosing copies of both letters for your information. It may be that you would like to devote one of the Lincoln Lores to this matter. The letter from the Union League gives some information which I had not known before.

Kindest personal regards,

  
George A. Dondero, M. C.

GAD:g

COPY

FROST, MYERS & TOWERS  
Attorneys & Counsellors at Law  
Hibbs Building

Washington, D. C.  
April 20, 1942

Hon. George A. Dondero,  
House of Representatives,  
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Dondero:

Referring to your letter of April 17, I recall very well being present at the time Mrs. Lincoln gave you a gold medal that belonged to President Lincoln; and I remember further that this medal, in an oblong, leather-covered box lined with velvet, was for many years kept by Mr. Lincoln--and subsequently by Mrs. Lincoln--in a safety deposit box along with a good many other mementos of the Civil War President.

It is my understanding that a Committee representing the Union League of Philadelphia presented this medal to the President in 1863, and that in so doing gave expression to their approval of President Lincoln's conduct of the War and national affairs.

With kindest personal good wishes to you and yours, believe me,

Sincerely,

(Signed) F. H. Towers

FNT/me



copy

THE UNION LEAGUE OF PHILADELPHIA

Office of the  
Secretary

April 21, 1942

My dear Mr. Congressman:

Thank you for your letter of April 17th relative to the Gold Medal of The Union League of Philadelphia presented to President Abraham Lincoln.

It had been planned to present this medal (the first of its kind) to President Lincoln upon the occasion of his visit to Philadelphia in celebration of Independence Day 1863. However, because of sudden changes in the war the President did not come to Philadelphia and the medal was forwarded to him. At the same time silver medals, together with letters extending the freedom of the League house, were forwarded to the members of his cabinet and several of the military leaders. Our records do not show that copies were retained by the League, although since that time several of the silver medals have been returned to us and are in our archives.

There have been eighteen Gold Medals of The Union League of Philadelphia awarded. Of this number eleven have been presented to members of The Union League for devotion to the ideals of the Union League. The remaining seven have been awarded to outstanding men of this country, including several Presidents, statesmen and military leaders.

I hope this will give you the information you desire and have asked my secretary to mail you a copy of the League handbook, which you might find of interest.

Respectfully yours,

(Signed) John Blakeley  
Secretary

The Honorable George A. Dondero  
House of Representatives  
Washington, D. C.

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**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, D. C.**

April 23, 1942

Dr. Louis A. Warren, Editor  
Lincoln Lore  
Lincoln National Life Insurance Co.  
Fort Wayne, Indiana

Dear Dr. Warren:

Since writing you recently, I have received from the Union League of Philadelphia their little booklet which is a history of the League.

On page 36 of their book is the following statement: "During the war period The Union League started its custom of awarding gold or silver medals to distinguished men. The first one was gold and went to President Lincoln."

This throws more light on the gold medal which Mrs. Robert Todd Lincoln gave me. If you intend to publish anything in regard to this Lincoln medal, I suggest that you write to the Union League in Philadelphia and ask them for a copy of their book, which gives considerable information about the medals which they issued, not only to President Lincoln, but also the silver ones to the members of his Cabinet.

Kindest personal regards,

*Geo. A. Dondero*  
George A. Dondero, M. C.

GAD:g



April 24, 1942

Mr. George A. Dondero  
Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C.

My dear Mr. Dondero:

Thank you ever so much for your very informative enclosures in your letter of April 22 which relate to the interesting medals in your possession.

I am sure the time will present itself one of these days to discuss the very interesting tokens.

Very truly yours,

LAW:EB

Director

# LINCOLN LORE

Bulletin of the Lincoln National Life Foundation - - - - - Dr. Louis A. Warren, Editor  
Published each week by The Lincoln National Life Insurance Company, Fort Wayne, Indiana

NUMBER 1188

FORT WAYNE, INDIANA

JANUARY 14, 1952

## PRESENTATION MEDALS

It is amazing how current events channel our thinking for the moment in parallel grooves and bring to the surface forgotten incidents of the past. No saga of the sea for many moons has so gripped the attention of the whole world as the heroic but losing battle waged by Captain Kurt Carlsen of the American freighter, Flying Enterprise. After an heroic deed is ventured one often hears the expression, "He deserves a medal." Lloyds of London, the insurance underwriters, presented one to Capt. Carlsen.

### Capt. David Jones Medal

Several years ago an English woman by the name of Mrs. Lewis Jones wrote the Lincoln Life Foundation about a silver medal in her possession which seems likely to have been a token presentation by President Lincoln to her father-in-law, David Jones. The medal bears the inscription: "The President of the United States to Capt. David Jones of the Brig Mary Ann for his rescue of the crew of the American ship Cornelia 1861." On one side there is displayed an American eagle and on the other side a storm scene is pictured with a lighthouse, at the base of which one man is assisting another out of the angry waves. The medal  $2\frac{1}{4}$  inches in diameter is set in a case which bears on it the same dedication as appears on the medal. The dye maker's inscription is as follows: "LEUTZE DEL ELLIS & CO." A further notation indicates that the ship Cornelia was from Portland, Maine. While there is a possibility that the medal was awarded by President Buchanan, who served until March 4, 1861, there is a tradition in the family that the name of the chief executive who made the presentation was Lincoln.

The Foundation has not succeeded in confirming the incident by the discovery of official papers relating to the presentation, but inasmuch as the story of the Flying Enterprise and its brave captain has aroused a new interest in seafaring men possibly some information about the saving of the crew of the ship Cornelia in 1861 may come to light.

### Sarah Catherine Ford Medal

John A. Ford, a soldier in the Mexican War, was run out of Virginia at the beginning of hostilities because of his loyalty to the Union and was made a captain in the army upon the recommendation of Secy. Cameron. In the course of his military duties he had an occasion to talk with the President in April 1861 and took with him his seven year old daughter, Sarah Catherine Ford. During the conference the little girl is said to have found herself seated on Mr. Lincoln's knee and told the President she wished she were a soldier and bragged about what she would do. The President said he would like to fill his army with Sarah-soldiers. While seated on Mr. Lincoln's knee she made this comment which greatly pleased the President. She said, "You've got the longest legs I ever saw." Two weeks later she received a \$20.00 gold piece from the President dated 1861. It is encased in a silver maltese cross. On one of the arms of the cross is this inscription: "Presented to Sarah C. Ford by Abraham Lincoln," and on another arm, "President of the U. S. Washington, D. C. on the 24th of April 1861."

### President Lincoln's Gold Medal

Abraham Lincoln had been expected to visit Philadelphia on Independence Day 1863 when he was to have

been presented with a gold medal by the Union League of that city. However, the great struggle going on at Gettysburg and Vicksburg demanded that he remain at Washington and the medal was forwarded to him. The purpose of the presentation was to give expression "to their approval of President Lincoln's conduct of the war and national affairs."

In the center of the obverse side of the medal is a shield with the words "E PLURIBUS UNUM" inscribed on it, above the shield are the words "UNION LEAGUE July 4th," on the left "1776" and on the right "1867." Below the shield the word "PHILADELPHIA" appears. On the reverse side this inscription is placed "ORGANIZED PHILADELPHIA DECEMBER 27th 1862." This medal received by the President on July 4, 1863 may have played some part in his selection of a theme which he developed in his Gettysburg Address in November. This gold medal was presented to Congressman George Dondero by the widow of Robert Lincoln.

### George Robinson Medal

Nearly fifty years ago a house painter discovered on a vacant lot in San Francisco, wrapped in a newspaper, a leather case enclosing a bronze medal about three inches in diameter. The obverse side of the medal contained the profile of an unidentified man and just under it this inscription, "For his heroic conduct of the 14th of April 1865 in saving the life of the Hon. William H. Seward, then Secretary of the United States." Encircling the profile were these words, "To George Robinson, awarded by the Congress of the United States March 1, 1871." On the reverse side of the medal two men are shown locked in combat, one armed with a bowie knife.

Robinson was a Maine volunteer who had been injured and while convalescing had been detailed as nurse and guard to attend Secretary Seward who had a broken jaw and fractured leg resulting from a carriage accident. Lewis Payne delegated by John Wilkes Booth to kill Seward overpowered Robinson and was able to get to his victim and slash his throat. Robinson "succeeded in stemming the blood from Seward's severed arteries and so saved his life." Robinson was awarded the gold medal and \$5,000 by special act of Congress March 1, 1871.

### The Widow Lincoln Medal

The most famous medallion associated with the Lincoln story is the gold medal presented by the citizens of France to the widow of Abraham Lincoln.

The communication to Mrs. Lincoln accompanying the medal was dated "Paris, Oct. 15, 1866" and this excerpt is copied from the letter of presentation:

"We are entrusted with offering to you the medal struck in honor of the great and virtuous man whose name you bear, on behalf of more than 40,000 citizens of France desirous of conveying their sympathy for the American Union in the person of one of its most noble and pure representatives."

The medal is  $3\frac{1}{4}$  inches in diameter and on the obverse side there is a profile of Mr. Lincoln with inscription in French and on the reverse side a group of figures of appropriate memorial design. The gold medal is now preserved in the Library of Congress and a few bronze replicas were struck off, one of which is in the Foundation collection.

